

CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

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Bishop Ordass Invited to Denmark and Sweden.

Head of the Lutheran Church in Hungary, Bishop Lajos Ordass, has been invited to visit Sweden and Denmark in connection with his trip to the Lutheran World Conference in Minneapolis this summer. The invitations have been issued by Archbishop Brilioth, Uppsala, and Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard, Copenhagen, respectively.

During the negotiations in February between the Hungarian authorities in Budapest and the Secretary General of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr. Lund-Quist, it was promised that permission for leaving the country for the conference would be granted to Bishop Ordass and other representatives of the Lutheran Church and it is therefore hoped that the authorities will be favourably disposed towards a possible visit to Sweden and Denmark. At one time Bishop Ordass studied in Sweden and he has several personal friends in Denmark.

Northern Folk High School for European Contact Being Planned in South Jutland.

It is planned to open a folk high school in Aabenraa in South Jutland, Denmark, which should try to bridge the gap between the Northern countries and Europe. Principle Poul Engberg, Rungsted, Denmark, who is the originator of the plan and designed to be the first principal of the School, states that both the Northern and the European culture is to be the basis of the School. It should be a place where young people, rooted in Northern and Danish culture, might become acquainted with spiritual currents in Europe since the War, and the School will also, to a certain extent, be open to students from other European countries and from America.

Not only in Denmark, but also in Finland, Norway and Sweden have these plans met with great interest in advance and it is expected to obtain financial support from these countries, both for the establishment of the School and for the running of it. Danish circles in South Slesvig, Germany, are also interested in the plans, in as much as the problems of the border region and other national problems of the Northern countries will be among the subjects for discussion in the

curriculum of the School. But the new school is not meant to be a specific "border school". The tuition at the School should tend to widen the horizon of the students so that they might become actively interested in international problems on the whole, not the least under Northern and European aspects.

The period of instruction should include a six months' winter course, winding up with a 3-4 weeks' tour of Europe, giving the students an opportunity of personal contact with schools for young people and folk high schools in other countries, and of visiting centres for European and international co-operation, especially in Strasbourg and Geneva. Besides this, there will be a six weeks' course in summer for Northern journalists and youth leaders at which the time will be divided equally between theoretical instruction and a study tour in Europe. Finally, it is planned to conduct a number of conferences and shorter courses at the school.

DENMARK

Special Services for Students From Foreign Countries.

The Student Christian Association in Copenhagen has arranged for two monthly church services for students from other countries living in the Danish capital. They now number several hundred students and, as many of them are not able to benefit very much from participation in Danish services, due to language difficulties, there will from now on be two special student services in English every month, alternating between the Anglican and the Lutheran order of service.

These services will take place on the same days as the special arrangements for foreign students by the general Students Association in Copenhagen so that a certain co-operation between the Associations will be established, and in connection with one of the two monthly services there will be a tea-party for both Danish and foreign students in order to break down the isolation which is often the experience of foreign students.

The services will be conducted by the Anglican priest in Copenhagen, Rev. Cardell Oliver, and the former Danish pastor in London, Rev. Viggo Jensen, and the students themselves will do duty at the services.

New Danish Bishop on the Mission Field of the Herrnhut Brethren.

The Danish section of the Herrnhut Brethren will now get its third bishop on the mission field. It is the Rev. Elmo Knudsen, at present working in the highlands of Central Africa. The ordination will take place this summer at the general synod of the Herrnhut Brethren in Bethlehem, U.S.A.

The Danish Church Delegation to Minneapolis.

The names of the members of the delegation from the Danish Lutheran National Church to the conference of the Lutheran Federation in Minneapolis have now been published. They are: Bishop Gudmund Schiøler, Professor K.E. Skydsgaard, Professor Regin Prenter, Rev. J.B. Leer Andersen, Secretary General, Rev. Westergaard Madsen, Secretary Gene-

ral, Rev. C. Rendtorff, Sister Eva Lyngby, and Judge Mogens Hvidt. Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard and the chairman of the Danish National Committee, Rev. Børge E. Andersen, were also on the list, but they are both unable to attend.

Danish Woman Pastor Causes Sensation in Norway and Sweden.

One of the four women pastors in the Danish Lutheran National Church, Rev. Helga Jensen, Skive, was invited to preach in both a Norwegian and a Swedish church last month. First she conducted an evening service in Skive's friendship town of Kongsvinger, and later on she preached in the Swedish town of Arvika. In both places her visit caused considerable attention and in several newspapers it was described as being nothing less than a historic event in the annals of the Church. Neither in the Norwegian nor in the Swedish National Churches may women take holy orders and from several quarters there has been very sharp criticism of "letting in" women pastors "by the backdoor" by such a visit.

Dean Egede Schack Dead.

One of the prominent persons of the Grundtvigian section of the Danish Lutheran Church, Dean Egede Schack, has died, 61 years old. Dean Schack joined the radically Barthian movement in Denmark, "Tidehverv", in the 1920's, but broke with it again and instead found his inspiration in Grundtvig's teachings. Dean Egede Schack has been of great importance to both Church and education.

"The State of Israel Founded on an Act of Injustice."

Axel Christensen, since April 1st the leader of the work among Arabian refugees of the Lutheran World Federation in succession to Christian Christiansen, immediately before his departure for Jordan in an interview in "Kristeligt Dagblad", Copenhagen, stated his views on the relations between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.

"Israel is founded on an act of injustice", he said, among other things, "and nothing good can ever come of it. The Arabs have been living in Israel for a thousand years, just as we have been living in Denmark. What should we say if some foreign nation suddenly turned up and declared that it was their country?"

Axel Christensen, who for the past few years has been Director of the Lutheran Augusta-Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem, declares that he sympathizes with the one million Arabian refugees from Palestine who will not forego their right to return and to obtain damages. He warns against letting oneself be blinded by one's sympathy for the Jewish people, a sympathy in which he, after all what they have suffered, shares himself, and goes on to say:

"I am not anti-Semitic. I admire the Jewish nation, but I am opposed to the State of Israel because it is founded on injustice. This is also the opinion of many Jews, but we do not hear much about it here at home."

Finally Axel Christensen mentions the great national awakenings taking place at the moment in the Arabic world as well as in other parts of Asia and Africa. He points out that one should not become

misled by the fact that the Soviet Union is fishing in troubled waters. The national movements in China, India, and Pakistan would have come regardless of whether or not Communism had succeeded in Russia. "We must try to understand the present national risings in the Asiatic-Arabic world. It would be a disaster if we closed our eyes to current events in the Far East and Africa. The bells are tolling for Europe these years and it is not only our Christian duty to try to understand and help; it is also the only wise policy."

FINLAND

New Ecclesiastic Office for Women Divinity Graduates.

It seems highly probable that the Finnish Lutheran National Church at its synod in 1958 will establish a new special office in the Church for women graduates in divinity. Last month the committee set up by the synod in 1953 issued a report stating that a majority of the committee (4 of the 5 committee members) are in favour of establishing a new ecclesiastic office, called "curate" or "vice pastor" for women divinity graduates. But on the other hand, the committee could not go in for the proposal of permitting women to take holy orders on equal footing with men. According to the report, women should not be permitted to administer the sacraments, but the Cathedral Chapters should, however, be entitled to allow women serving in hospitals and prisons, in special cases, to give the eucharist to persons not able to participate in the ordinary service of the congregation.

The new office should cover ordinary congregational work (meetings and the like), work among children and young people (Sunday schools and preparation for confirmation), spiritual guidance and succour among women and young girls as well as visits in the homes and to invalids. The women graduates in divinity should be ordained for their office by the bishop. When such a post became vacant the Cathedral Chapter should nominate three candidates from among the applicants and the congregational councils should then choose between these three nominees.

In connection with the work of the committee its chairman, Professor Aimo T. Nikolainen, has written a thesis on the offices in the church in the light of the New Testament and the symbolic scripts.

The committee has also made a survey of the employment of the present women theologians. Only 42 of the 252 women divinity graduates are directly engaged in the service of the Church, 32 do duty in various religious organizations, and 110 are employed in schools and folk high schools. 51 are married to clergymen.

Before the report was published, questionnaires were sent to all congregational councils and from the answers received it was clearly evident that a special office for women within the Church was much needed. A very large majority was of the opinion that women would be able to make an important contribution in the fields of work mentioned above. Only 112 of the 492 congregational councils, however, would allow women theologians to preach at divine services.

The Finland-Swedish Church weekly "Församlingsbladet", in commenting on the findings of the committee, says:

"The report is probably an expression of the present need of our Church and adapted to what is practicable at the moment. But by its statement of reasons for the desirability of employing women theologians and its proposed provisions for safeguarding their social and ecclesiastic position the report is, after all, a step in the direction of women clergy. If the proposal is carried through, it will probably not be so very long before women are admitted to the full ecclesiastic office of priest."

New Church Statistics.

The new Finnish statistical year-book, published recently, states that at New Year's there were 4.351.080 members of the Lutheran National Church, distributed over 564 parishes. Tampere (Tammerfors) is the largest of the dioceses with app. 1,175.000 members while the other dioceses all have from 400.000 to 600.000 members.

The most orthodox congregations number 75.396 members, divided among 25 congregations. The Finnish Free Church has 7,167 members, the Adventist Church 4.027, Jehova's Witnesses 2.563, the Methodist Church 2.515, the Baptist Church 1.975, and the Roman-Catholic Church 1.940 members.

Finnish Delegation to Minneapolis Appointed.

At the Lutheran World Federation Conference in Minneapolis the Finnish Lutheran National Church will be represented by the following delegation: Bishop Martti Simojoki, Professor Osmo Tiililä, Professor W.A. Schmidt, Lieut.Gen. Kai Savonjousi, Judge Edvin Törmälä, Dr. Eira Paunu, D.D., Dr. Inger Tiililä, Dean Werner J. Aurola, Rev. Samuel Lehtonen, Dean Pauli Valas, and Dean K.E. Rinne. Besides these, there will be five representatives of the youth organisations, and Dean Paavo Hytönen, Head of the Finnish Mission to Seamen, will be "official visitor".

Two Hungarian Pastors Visit Finland.

At the invitation of the University of Turku (Åbo) the Hungarian minister, Dr. Rudolf Molnár, accompanied by his Finnish-born wife Elmi and their children, has arrived in Finland in order to give a series of lectures on the Hungarian culture and language. Dr. Molnár brought greetings from the two Hungarian Lutheran bishops, Ordass and Turóczy, expressing the gratitude of the Hungarian people and Church for the aid received from Finland. Dr. Molnár told that Bishop Turóczy is planning a visit to Finland this summer.

Another Hungarian clergyman, Dean Emil Koren, who has previously visited the country, arrived in the middle of March in order to study in Finland for a couple of weeks.

Finnish Dean Translates Bible Into the Oshikuanjama Language.

The British Bible Society has caused the Finnish Missionary Society to send the leader of the Deaconess Institution in Helsinki (Helsingfors), Dean Walter Björklund, to the Ambo-country in order to revise the previous translation of the New Testament into one of the two main languages of the Ambo-country, the Oshikuanjama tongue, and to translate all of the Old Testament into this language. Dean Björk-

lund has previously worked for 17 years in the Ambo-country in the service of the Finnish Missionary Society. The work of translation is expected to take four years.

Proposal for the Abolition of Religious Instruction Turned Down.

At the second reading of the new Elementary Education Act in the Finnish Parliament two Communist Members of Parliament, Rownell and Tiekso-Isakson, introduced a Bill proposing the abolition of religious instruction in the curriculum of the "civic school", e.g. the continuation school. The Bill was turned down with 131 votes against 52. In favour of the Bill were the Communists and a number of Social-Democrats.

News in Brief.

- The Bishop of the Diocese of Tampere (Tammerfors), Tills Gulin, has appealed for action against beauty contests. At a meeting in Tampere he said, "The women organizations ought to take up the fight against beauty contests. They are detrimental to morals and cause sufferings".
- A Russian grave yard will now be established in Porkkala where all the Soviet Russians buried in various places in the previously Russian-occupied Porkkala district will be interred. There are already 165 Russian graves in the place concerned from earlier days. The grave yard will be surrounded by a hedge and a monument will be erected.

NORWAY

Welfare State - Neither Guardian State Nor Anarchy.

In a couple of leading articles the Christian daily in Oslo, "Vårt Land", goes against a too rapid development in the direction of state control at the expense of the freedom of the individual. It is felt that when man is placed in the centre and the growth of ethical values are given a high place, as the case is in the recently published cultural programme of the Labour Party, then it is a form of acknowledging that the pendulum is about to swing the other way in favour of freedom. It is emphasized, however, that only when God is put in the centre and man and society are regarded in the light of eternal responsibility and obligation it will be possible to find the synthesis of freedom and dependence able to keep the welfare state from either degenerating into totalitarian guardianship or disintegrating into anarchy.

In one of the leading articles it says:

"The fault with many of those who seriously strive to create a paradise on earth by political means is not that they try to build it on justice, but that they believe it possible without God. Behind the "iron curtain" the Communists have tried out such an experiment in pure cultivation with a result which we pray God to save and deliver us from. We ourselves in the West have made an attempt at creating a welfare state. The intention is good, we suppose, but the result is beginning to become somewhat lopsided because the perspective of eternity has been excluded to far too great an extent. This is evident, among other things, in the way in which charity has been put in the

corner. The State is supposed to see to it that justice is being done through legislation and regulations, social arrangements, and state control to such an extent that there is no need for the love of one's neighbour and the helpfulness of the individual, nor for Christian charity.

Our society in the welfare state, however, seems to be approaching the point where ordinary Christians must acknowledge the value and necessity of working for a realization of the ideal of justice by political means, while, on the other hand, the necessity of mitigating and humanizing the State through the Christian ideals of charity and evaluations of life become more and more apparent to the other part also. Charity and love of one's neighbour in the widest possible sense of the word is needed if the whole thing is not to end up as an inhuman robot state."

Is it Possible for Christians to Go In For the Co-Existence of Religions?

Bishop Bivind Berggrav's periodical, "Kirke og Kultur" (Church and Culture) in its last number publishes a long article in which Lecturer at the University of Oslo, Tor Aukrust, gives an account of the views of Professor Toynbee regarding world state and world religion, prefaced by an interesting commentary by Finner Berggrav.

As is well known, Professor Toynbee is of the opinion that the higher religions must mutually recognize one another in order to make a peaceful co-existence of the religions possible. The background for this view is that the co-operation in other spheres of life among the nations of the world is in rapid growth, and that the only salvation from a materialistic levelling of the technical fellowship lies in the religious values and a personal relation with God. For the sake of humanity it is necessary, Toynbee feels, to give all higher faith in God its acknowledged place as being the carrier of the spirit in daily life.

"The directly repulsive element in Toynbee's thought," Bishop Berggrav comments, "does not give us any right to reject it without serious consideration. But it is not easy to consider this matter with an unbiassed mind. In regard to the unique position of Christ we cannot relinquish anything. But it is a question whether we are quite free for the kind of superiority which takes this as such a matter of course that we despise the other higher religions. There is no thought of weakening the Christian mission, but rather of revising the spirit and tone of voice when we are dealing with the higher religious systems of Asia. We must further consider whether we dare accept the responsibility of causing a continued syncretism by refusing such a "co-existence" of religions or, vice versa, become guilty of causing a further denial of faith in all religions and particularly in the Christian teachings."

Bishop Berggrav describes the effort of thinking through these problems as being uncomfortable and tedious, but unfortunately necessary in our days. We in the West do not have the word of decision, he feels. "We must wait eagerly to see what the Christians in the East have to say. But, nevertheless, we have the first responsibility."

Local Revivals In Many Places in Norway.

It seems to be an encouraging fact that more big and small local revivals than in any other year since the War have been taking place, and still do, this winter, it is stated by the Christian daily in Oslo, "Vårt Land". The paper adds that also attendance at meetings and, to a certain extent, in church must be said, on the whole, to be better than before, and there is greater responsiveness towards preaching. Revivals in the South and North Aune valleys and in Høyland on Jæren are especially mentioned and it seems as if the revivals are spreading onwards from there. Smaller local revivals in Rogaland and Trøndelag, particularly in Orkdal, Namnes, and Trondheim are also mentioned.

New Publication of "Church and Film".

The "Christian Film Council" in Norway, supported by a large number of Lutheran organizations, has started in publication of a monthly paper entitled "Church and Film". In the first number of the periodical its programme is expressed in the following way:

"We are not the Church. But we are part of it. And we want to take our stand in the Church and evaluate the films from the point of view of our Christian outlook on life. Not in order to be censors, but in order to judge the "message" contained in the films."

The periodical employs some 30 staff members who are responsible for the film reviews. All the new films shown in the cinemas will be judged both from an artistic as well as an ethical point of view. Speculation in sex and violence will be opposed and endeavours will be made to act as advisors to the readers in the choice of good films - without dividing the films into those permissible and those prohibited as the Roman-Catholics do.

First Jesuit to Obtain Residence Permit in Norway.

Until a few months ago Jesuits were not allowed to reside in Norway by an Act of Constitution. However, the "Jesuit Paragraph" was repealed by the Norwegian Parliament following upon a very lively debate (see CN No. 31) and now the first Jesuit is about to arrive in the country. It is the Father Richard Brackett from Holy Cross College, Worcester, U.S.A., who has been invited by the Roman-Catholic bishop in Oslo, Jacob Mangers. He is to take up work in the Oslo region.

"Crisis is Knocking at the Door of the Northern Free Churches".

The well known Free Church member, Martin Ski, of the Methodist Church, in a review of the book "Den Kristna Frälsesamlingen i Norden" (The Free Churches in the Northern Countries) by the Swedish Professor Gunnar Westin puts forward some remarkable statements regarding his views on the religious situation in the Northern countries.

He mentions the many battles in church politics during the years from 1855 until 1905 between the privileged Lutheran National Churches and the growing Free Church communities. These struggles in which the privileged Churches were on the defensive came simultaneous-

ly with the inner struggles between faithfulness in confession and rationalism or liberalism. But by this the National Churches were purged to the very core. They not only met the crisis, but they have also accepted its challenge. This, however, has not been the case in regard to the Free Churches in the Northern countries, Martin Ski writes. They are too young for it and the time of revival is still much too close. On the whole, the Free Churches live in the dangerous imagination that they are bound to advance because they are Free Churches. They have achieved their right, obtained their space of existence, they have worked out their doctrines, built up their organizations, have experienced their revivals, and are still taking advantage of the low-hanging fruits of the victories not so far gone. They are too old to benefit from new revivals on the same basis as before and too young to take a coming - and already present - crisis seriously."

Martin Ski concludes his sensational article with the following words:

"The crisis is today also knocking at the door of the Free Churches. On the whole, the revivalist expansion - which is their actual thread of life - has dried up, and in order to survive they must re-organize, so that they from being feasting revivalist churches become more or less static Churches, living side by side with and partly on the foundation of the National Churches. And in the race towards an inevitable spiritual renewal - if they are to continue to exist - the Evangelical National Church is far ahead. That is to say, it has both met and acknowledged the crisis and is half-way into it. The Free Churches, on the other hand, still carry the smile from the great days on their faces. But the crisis will come - it has come - and the smile must give way to the strong features of willpower in order to overcome the danger. And it is a question whether the Free Churches are able to withstand the peeling off and the inevitable reduction. Because it is a fact that they cannot - according to the laws of revival - go unscathed and unreduced through the very narrow gate of spiritual renewal."

SWEDEN

Long Time Programme for Evangelization Necessary in Stockholm.

According to information now available the AKO-revivalist campaign in Stockholm, lasting for eight weeks and ending at the beginning of March - drew audiences numbering altogether 135,000 people. 200 people who had not before been in active contact with the Church came to a personal decision during the campaign and 6-7000 people who described themselves as being lukewarm Christians experienced a spiritual renewal. The main organizer of the campaign, Mr. Gösta Engwall, says that this is an outstanding result, considering conditions in Stockholm.

A remarkable commentary by the well known Free Church member, Editor Erland Sundström, is to be found in the "Morgon-Bladet". Among other things, he mentions the very lively debate in the press, caused by the campaign, and he feels that it is possible here to note "a shifting in the manner of evaluation, a change in attitude" which

is beginning to take form. "The AKO has accentuated the unmistakable signs of spring in our hitherto Siberian climate in the religious sphere." About attendance at the meetings he writes that it must call for deliberation: the audiences have predominantly consisted of active members of the congregations with only a proportionally small group of "unfamiliar" faces among them, although the picture is somewhat better if the meetings for young people and the "special" meetings are also counted. The conversions must, of course, always be a source of joy, the Editor continues, but there is no question of a real spiritual revival or an important impact on the non-Christian city community.

The Commentator feels that the time has come for a radical examination of the strategy of evangelization. The conclusion must be the drawing up of a long time programme which takes into account the fact that the conditions of conversion involve a religious "incubation process". The milder cultural climate which seems to be on the way should be utilized in such a way that much wider circles are drawn into the power field of evangelization and become the objects of information, education, and a shaping of attitude of the kind which made the great national revivals possible."

Big Swedish Mission Atlas Now Available.

The Swedish Missionary Council in co-operation with the lithographic institute of the general staff has published a big mission atlas of 48 pages. The work which was started by the Swedish Institute for Mission Research in Uppsala has been compiled under the guidance of Professor Bengt Sundkler with Gudmar Sommarström as editor of the maps.

The Swedish Mission Atlas is the first Swedish atlas of its kind and, as far as may be ascertained, the first in the work which completely maps out the missionary activities of a country. The first 28 pages give well-arranged and illustrated statistics dealing with the distribution of the world religions, the present situation of world mission, and the contribution by the Swedish missions towards evangelization, education, and nursing.

It is evident from the statistics that, among other things, the Swedish Missionary Societies annually collect altogether 17 million Swedish crowns for missionary work and that there are Swedish missions in some 400 different places in the world at the moment. 140 hospitals are supported from Sweden and in these 460.738 patients are treated every year.

The Christian Group in Parliament and the "Thursday Group".

At the annual meeting last month of the Christian group, numbering some 60 members, in the Swedish Parliament, the Member of Parliament, Eric Nelander, was elected new chairman. During session this group arranges for 4-5 lectures and discussions on topical subjects, often introduced by prominent Church men. All Members of Parliament are welcome at the meetings and Members who are not professing Christians frequently take part in the meetings. Originally the group was predominantly conservatively inclined, but now it draws members irrespect-

ive of Party allegiances. Many "four-Party" proposals have originated in the group, such as, for instance, the Bill about induced abortion mentioned elsewhere in this number.

Besides this group there is also among the Members a so-called "Thursday Group" whose 45 members meet for devotional meeting with prayers, Bible study and singing. This group, founded in 1888, is more of a Low- and Free Church character, but several Members belong to both groups, and the activities of both do not compete with one another, but rather supplement each other.

Legislation Concerning Induced Abortion to Be Revised?

Headed by Axel Gustafsson a group of 48 Members of Parliament have signed a proposal to revise the present legislation concerning induced abortion. The Bill will be introduced in Parliament shortly. The 48 Members belong to four different Parties, but almost all of them are known to be professed Christians.

The reason for the Bill is the unrest during the last few years caused by the so-called social-medical indication in the present Act of Parliament, i.e. the right to legally induced abortion "when consideration of the living conditions of the mother and circumstances on the whole make it probable that her mental and physical strength would be seriously damaged by the birth and care of the child". From many quarters, also on the part of physicians, it has been pointed out that the stipulation leaves far too much to the personal discretion of the physician and the authorities dealing with the individual cases. Thus it has been proved that certain physicians have decided in favour of legally induced abortion in a remarkably large number of cases.

From many sides voices have been raised in favour of abolishing the right to legally induced abortion on social-medical grounds which was introduced by the Act of Parliament of 1938.

According to a provisional estimate there were 3.856 legally induced abortions in 1956, while the figure for 1951 was as high as 6.328. There are probably twice to three times as many illegally as legally induced abortions annually.

